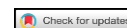






EXPLORING THE THEORY OF ACTIVITY IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE WRITING: THE CASE FOR WHATSAPP



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ABSTRACT

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WhatsApp is a social media application that is used widely by people today and enables mobile and ubiquitous learning at a different level. This study evaluated the use of mobile instant messaging tools to support teaching and learning in higher education. A total of 66 students in Penang use smartphones with WhatsApp were assigned into experimental and control groups. Besides the traditional classroom learning for both groups, the experimental group was also supported by the teacher-student interaction via WhatsApp outside school hours. The participants of the control group used WhatsApp only for scholarly communication. Pre-test scores were used as the covariate. The marginal means on the post-test scores showed that the participants in the experimental group performed better than those in the control group. The intervention of WhatsApp improved the learning achievement of the participants. The strength of the intervention between the two groups was medium to large. A questionnaire designed by the author was administered at the end of the study. The participants showed positive perception and acceptance of the use of WhatsApp for teaching and learning. The typical usability issues on mobile learning were found to be valid. The use of the WhatsApp application enables to improve learners' writing performance, classroom engagement, academic achievement as well as enriches learners' writing that leads to a sustainable student. It is also recommended that the study be conducted for a more extended period in order to determine the consistency and sustainability of the learners' improvements in writing utilizing the WhatsApp application.

Contribution/ Originality: This study contributes to the existing literature on the use of WhatsApp in the language classroom. This paper scaffolds the theory of activity via the teaching and learning of writing using WhatsApp in the classroom. This theory is used to explain how writing using WhatsApp mirrors the theory of activity.

1. INTRODUCTION

Mobile technologies offer new opportunities by providing more choices in when, where, and how students learn, especially in improving their English language writing. Mobile learning refers to the use of mobile or wireless devices for learning. It is viewed as a useful component of a flexible learning model (Peters, 2007). Pea and Maldonado (2006) stated that mobile learning incorporates transformative innovations for learning futures. There

are recent innovations in program applications such as WhatsApp that enables students to improve their learning style and, therefore, improve their English language writing. The internet holds a vast array of information. The computer is also useful in helping students, both in terms of construct and a platform to share knowledge (Richard & Haya, 2009).

Undeniably, writing is the most critical element in a language. Writing skills are essential skills in higher education, especially for students, and are considered as an essential element in having an accomplished English language competency. Writing is feared by many. Some fear writing because they do not have enough content; while others fear because they feel they lack the necessary writing skills. According to Rahmat (2019) fear of writing is influenced by the environment of the writer. This means having proper environment may help to reduce writers' fear. One way to create a positive environment is by having different tools in teaching the writing process, the learning process will be more comfortable.

Educational mobile tools have emerged and shown great potential to help students and the teacher's role from a provider to a resource person in this paradigm shift are essential in improving the students' writing (Pence, 2007). This study would like to explore the possibilities of WhatsApp in enhancing English language writing. The objective of this study is:

1. To examine student's perceptions towards WhatsApp in English language writing.
2. To identify a student's acceptance of WhatsApp as an English language writing platform.
3. To analyze student's perceptions toward WhatsApp as a platform in English language writing.

The research questions are as follow:

1. What are the student's perceptions of using WhatsApp in English language writing?
2. How do students accept WhatsApp as an English language writing platform?
3. How do students perceive WhatsApp as a platform in English language writing?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Mobile Learning as an Educational Tool

Prensky (2001) highlights that students in the new era are all native speakers of the digital language of computers, including video games and the internet. Hence, it is not surprising that the students frequently adopt new technologies in learning and constructing the knowledge learned. Students use computers, mobile devices, and a variety of other devices and tools of the digital age (Prensky, 2001). It is through the new use of these devices that the transmission of knowledge through the use of mobile technology, mobile learning, or M-learning is introduced in education. It is a new generation of distance learning, focusing on the use of mobile devices, and the WhatsApp messaging is incorporated to improve essay writing performance.

Mobile learning is a learning technology that uses a variety of learning approaches and methods across multiple contexts and social interactions (Vygotsky, 1978) with personal electronic devices (Crompton, 2013). As mentioned earlier, the use of mobile devices provides students with the opportunity to learn anywhere and at any time (Crescente & Lee, 2011). Kukulska-Hulme and Traxler (2007) suggest that mobile devices used in distance learning are more suitable for informal learning than formal learning, and it is suitable for situated, authentic, and personalized mobile learning. Some of the research shows that the use of mobile devices in learning used widely to enhance group interactions through discussions, in the WhatsApp group and the sharing of knowledge among students using synchronous or asynchronous mobile communication modes, such as WhatsApp instant messaging, Mobile Social networks and Web-based learning (Echeverría et al., 2011) in hopes to enhance the students' ability in essay writing performance. Mobile learning technologies include varieties of mobile devices, such as Mp3 players, notebooks, mobile phones, iPods, iPhones, and tablets, to name a few. These mobile devices provide mobility and interactivity for the students as it focuses on hands-on activities engaging with the students' style of learning and improves their English essay writing. A smartphone is a mobile phone with advanced computing capabilities

and connectivity (Andrew, 2009). As smartphones as a platform for mobile distance education and currently, 90% of the smartphone sales worldwide are for devices powered by Google's Android and Apple's iOS mobile operating systems (Charles, 2013).

2.2. Social Networking Sites (S.N.S.) & Groups

This study investigates the effectiveness of using WhatsApp in order to improve the English language. S.N.S. is an Internet site that provides a core set of services where the participants will be able to build, create, and maintain a relationship with friends or contacts and communicate with them in various ways (Boyd & Ellison, 2007; Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007; Gross & Acquisti, 2005). Social networking enables mutual interaction between individuals and groups to become easier by providing options for giving feedback and support social relationships. This new phenomenon is representing the new style of communicating without the discrimination of age, gender, or culture (Llorens & Capdeferro, 2011). Mobile technology, blogging, forums, chat, and discussion rooms, photo, and video sharing are some of the lists in terms of interactive technologies that are available on S.N.S.s (Norhayati & Nor Hasbiah, 2010). The recent development in communication is the use of WhatsApp as an educational tool.

2.3. Past Research on the Effectiveness of Social Networking for Educational Use

There is overwhelming evidence on the effectiveness of social networking tools for education and learning, including language learning (Kabilan, Ahmad, & Abidin, 2010). Facebook, for instance, is a medium well explored by researchers and concluded that Facebook is student-friendly, student-centered, and student-controlled as it invites participants rather than mandating (Sherry & Magro, 2011). Thus, in order to drive knowledge forward, the researcher tries another medium to improve essay writing performance via WhatsApp.

S.N.S.s are related to many pedagogical approaches, especially in constructivism. It provides users with sharing information such as email, chats, instant messages, videos, blogging, file, and photo sharing as these features are free (Kayri & Cakir, 2010). S.N.S.s create cooperative environments and support learning as they engage the participants to interact socially, hence, develop a more critical environment. The chances of providing students' interaction and increases students' satisfaction through lessons in how to improve essay writing performance.

Another educational platform in the mid-1980s was the Discussion Forums or D.F.s. It is similar to the WhatsApp platform in terms of it being a form of asynchronous electronic mediated device. D.F.s were unstructured, and they help to trigger ideas and thoughts as they provide the opportunity for the members to collaborate in learning and teaching, making them a useful mechanism in active learning (Saade & Huang, 2009). By having a quality learning experience, it proves that students' interaction and participation in technology-mediated education are essential to improve their English language writing. It is a successful tool for enhancing collaborative learning by attracting students to participate in an academic discussion (Swan et al., 2000).

Social networking is a global phenomenon that is more than a craze as it represents a new way of relating to each other without discriminating (Llorens & Capdeferro, 2011). It offers students the opportunity to explore and learn beyond authentic materials as this new technology enhances students' opportunities to interact and collaborate. Social networking acts as a tool to develop the mutual interaction between individuals and groups. It is more convenient, providing social feedback and encourages the supportive establishment of a social relationship.

The use of social networking in teaching writing is still new to the formal education system. However, past researchers claimed that it improves the students' skills concerning information and technology (Johnson, Adams, & Cummins, 2012). The new technology in education will improve students' classroom engagement, increase their academic achievement, and enriches writing. Blogging, for instance, is a technological innovation that helped incorporate the intervention of learning methods in students' writing skills as it provides opportunities for learning. A study conducted by Hall and Davison (2007) proves that blogs improved students' writing skills. By having flexibility in learning, students will be able to improve as they are learning in a less stressful environment.

Past research includes mobile technology in learning as an emerging technological process (Pavlik, 2015). An investigation of the effects of SMS messages in comparison to printed materials conducted by Lu (2008) and Zhang (2009). They found that the SMS group performed better than the control group, thus indicating that social networking has significance in improving learning. A recent study by Suwantarathip and Orawiwatnakul (2015) point out that the experimental study comparing the effect of in-class paper-based vocabulary and the participants from the experimental group outperformed the control group proving that social network can be an alternative learning tool. Students reported that the use of mobile phones is preferable to the use of printed materials (Thornton & Houser, 2005).

Another study conducted by Basoglu and Akdemir (2010) on the difference between the use of mobile phones and flashcards reported a difference between the groups, favoring the experimental group as it studied on the Moodle-based system known as Vocab Tutor developed for computers and mobile phones. Students prefer using a social network such as smartphones to learn (Stockwell, 2008). The use of mobile vocabulary learning application concluded that WhatsApp is the best way to learn and teach rather than employing the traditional method (Wang & Shih, 2015). WhatsApp is a useful tool providing outside-the-classroom opportunities for weaker students (Lawrence, 2015). Students learned more effectively-being in a social network as it encourages feedback, critical analysis, and articulation of opinions by offering collaborative learning and student-centered learning environment, and thus, social networking more convenient and accessible amongst students in learning.

In Malaysia, Online Forums is an effective method of language teaching as it allows the students to have the time to think and practice. The opportunity to use the targeted language outside the classroom hence the more active the students are, the higher chance for them to acquire new information and knowledge (Krish, 2010). Another study conducted by Alsaleem (2013) indicates that social network such as WhatsApp creates a sense of enjoyment, allowing students to use WhatsApp in dialogue journaling as a learning tool. It is interesting when WhatsApp as a learning tool, it is mainly associated with informality rather than being informal circumstances. Students tend to have trouble seeing the distinction between formal and informal writing. However, by using WhatsApp as a tool, students learned the language, and regardless of the situation, learning takes place in an unconventional way (Helderman, 2003). Therefore, the use of WhatsApp as a learning tool will hopefully have a positive impact on the students' essay writing performance as it is also a form of social networking.

2.4. Writing and Technology

Writing is a “conversation between the writer and the reader”. This conversation gets clearer if it becomes two-way. This two-way communication is referred to as Flower (1994) as “negotiation of meaning”. Negotiation of meaning can be allowed to take place if the writer is actively communicating while writing, or even taking about writing. Negotiation of meaning is a valuable experience for students in several ways. Firstly, the conversations help resolve some conflicts students have on the writing activity. Next, the fact that the conversations are build on multiple voices, enables the students to consider different opinions or even look at their problems from different perspectives. In the world of technology, conversations on writing can be easily done using mobile technology. Due to the internet being the new trend in educational tools and informational medium for the next generation (Ahmed, 2010; Tapscott, 1998) its adoption has tremendously changed the landscape of education. In the modern educational theory, students learn differently and are slowly moving away from the traditional behaviorist perspective.

The scenario where students are passive is now shifted in a modern learning paradigm, where three main theories, namely connectivism, constructivism, and the theory of Activity, are combined (Mai, 2005). Connectivism takes place through the use of mobile technology. The use of technology facilitates teaching and learning. When a community of students who cooperate collaborate to participate in course activities, the interaction can further encourage learning through constructivism where knowledge is constructed through negotiation of interaction (Cross, 1998). The main objective is to advance the construction and sharing of knowledge between groups through

collaborative learning activities (Bielaczyc & Collins, 1999) that is achieved through the WhatsApp groups. Students who are engaged in a working group believe that their needs can be satisfied through working cooperatively and collaboratively as they share the same ideas and points of view (Rovai, 2002).

Based on the activity theory, the subject works as part of the community to achieve the object. According to Bertelsen and Bodker (2003), there are three levels of activity. The first level the level where the activity by the community is done towards an objective (goal). The second level is where action is done towards a specific goal. The final level is operation structure stage. This where the activity is automated by the doer. This theory allows researchers to analyze the structure, development, and the context of learning activities done with the treatment of mobile technologies (Bellynck, Boitet, & Kenwright, 2009; Nardi, 1996) as it also suitable for sustaining and improving the learning process through groups in WhatsApp.

The theory of Activity is functions at three main level. The first level is (a) technological level: usability and habits. At the technological level, this theory considers tools as a bridge that influences the students' interaction, which is influenced by culture. The second level is (b) Individual level: perceptions . The students are at the individual level due to the students treated as contextual subjects in an engaging learning environment. The third level (c) is the community level: social presence , roles and rules. This includes social interaction and knowledge sharing in the WhatsApp group

In the evaluation of the students in the WhatsApp environment, this theory is applied in order to analyze and to explore the factors influencing the students' participation in the WhatsApp group (Hewitt, 2004). The use of mobile technology in the teaching of writing in order to improve pre-university students writing performance is essential as it influences the students' attitudes in the hope of being able to perform better in their writing with the help of WhatsApp. In another related research done by Mercier, Vourloumi, and Higgins (2017) they examine students who learn via an online group such as WhatsApp group. Their findings indicate that students can influence other students to participate in their discussions. Hence, the results of the research found that the students are more motivated and have positive responses to the Mathematics knowledge shared. The teacher plays an essential role in guiding the students in a group as social interaction helps the students to learn and share knowledge. The research has proven that the group will not have an active discussion regarding the topic without the presence of the teacher. Tennyson (2010) in an article published in Contemporary Educational Technology, claims in the 1990s, the factor that improves social interaction among students in a group is the teachers. Teachers aid the group of students to learn, and this is an important feature found in the research (Tennyson, 2010). Therefore, the teacher's role is not entirely alienated in the new generation of learning, specifically in M-learning.

In M-learning, other research in the field found that students integrate into the group through mobile technology from learning discussions. It is an added advantage as it eases the whole process of learning by influencing every student in the group (Litchfield, 2007). Students who participate in group discussions in a WhatsApp group are reported to improve their social connections, self-esteem, and these factors boosted their learning performance (Yu, Tian, Vogel, & Kwok, 2010). 70% of the students agreed that they were able to learn more from an online community such as the WhatsApp groups, Facebook communities, Twitter chats, and Google+ (Preston et al., 2010).

2.5. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework combines the theory of activity and ESL writing. The theory of activity states that learning takes place at the technological level. For this current study, this is done through the use of mobile technology. Next, the interaction between technology and further enhance the learners' capabilities of a writer. The use of mobile technology encourages interaction at community level through the WhatsApp community. In this current study, the theory of activity used to enhance ESL writing in the classroom. Finally, figure 1, students' perceptions and motivations are measured to see how the theory of activity can influence English language writing.

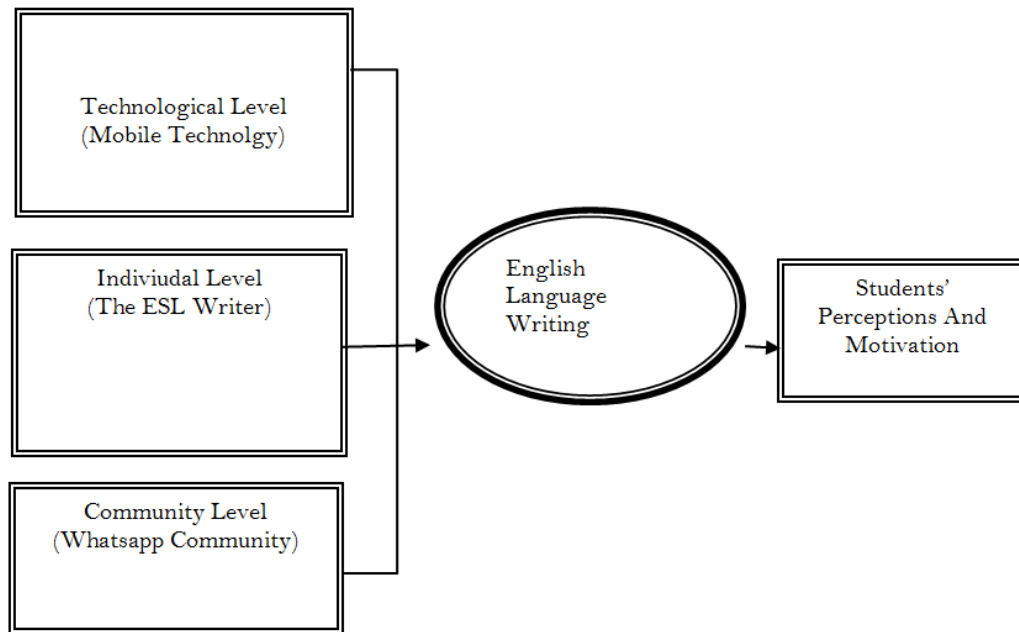


Figure-1. The Theoretical Framework of the Study.

Source: Barhoumi (2015).

2.6. Instrument

A questionnaire was used to find out the pre-university students in the experimental group's perceptions about the use of WhatsApp as a tool to improve their English writing competencies. The questionnaire was adapted from Alsaleem (2013); Kabilan et al. (2010) and Asunka (2008). Changes were made to the original questionnaire to accommodate the present study's sample. There are 17 items in the questionnaire, and each question used a 5-point Likert item from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree."

The questionnaire in this study was aimed to elicit students' perceptions regarding the use of WhatsApp to improve their essay writing skills and on the effectiveness of the tool in helping the students write. The respondents were required to read the statements and put a circle in the appropriate boxes. Likert Scale was used because the responses are easily quantifiable and allow the respondents to respond to a degree of agreement. Before the actual study, the questionnaire was piloted with ten students who resembled the study sample. The reliability of the questionnaire was calculated. The questionnaire was also piloted to check the validity of the content using the SPSS software to ensure its effectiveness. Five lesson plans and five tests were designed for both groups in the study. The treatment was conducted in five weeks' lessons. The respective teachers of the groups validated the lesson plans. It was done to ensure that the control group teacher was not affected or influenced by the experimental group's lesson plan. While qualitative data were gathered using students' comments in the WhatsApp group.

The Assessment Criteria used was similar to the ones used by the Malaysian Examination Council (M.E.C.) and the school, to assess MUET writing samples. The full mark for each assessment is 30 for task fulfillment and 15 for language and organization. The average marks that both the examiners awarded for the pre-test and the post-test show some improvement in all the three aspects. After the completion of the pilot study, all of the participants agreed that the WhatsApp group helped them to express their ideas and facilitated them to write better for the tasks given. All of the names of the students in the WhatsApp group were created by the researcher to preserve confidentiality. No real names were revealed in the whole process. Before the questionnaire was distributed, it was validated by an expert, and therefore the validity of the questions was checked and confirmed. Construct validity was conducted to determine whether the participants can comprehend the items in the questionnaire while the Cronbach Alpha Test was done for the reliability of those items. Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software version 22 was used to analyze the data. According to Gleim and Gliem (2003) the

closer Cronbach's alpha coefficient is to 1.0, the greater the internal consistency of the items in the Scale. As the Scale showed a high level of internal ability 0.804, the questionnaire is considered valid, and further tests can be conducted.

Table-1. Results of the Cronbach's alpha reliability test.

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha based on Standardized Items	Number of Items
0.804	0.819	17

Source: Gleim and Gliem (2003).

2.7. Postings and Comments in the WhatsApp Group

The three samples were added in the WhatsApp group as all the 33 members, including the researcher, were free to post any comments and engage in all the discussions. All comments were collected as data in order to do a thematic and document analysis triangulating with the quantitative data collected via the questionnaire.

2.8. Questionnaire

A Likert scale questionnaire that consisted of 17 questions about the students' perception of their writing ability would be used in this study to gather the required data. The questionnaire is designed by the researcher on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree' with values 1 to 5 assigned to each item. Respondents were required to select the option which best indicates their personal feeling. All items are positively worded to ensure that the items would be understood and were suitable for the pre-university students.

The use of a questionnaire has some definite advantages over other methods as it requires less time, is less expensive, and permits the collection of data from a much larger sample, and the minimum respondents should be 30. As for this study, the post-test questionnaires were given to 33 students in the experimental group in order to elicit information about their writing performance. Their opinions about the effectiveness of the WhatsApp were also made in their WhatsApp chats. The questions seek to find on the students' perception of the effects of WhatsApp as an aid to improve. With reference to Table 2, the samples chosen were labeled K, A, and Z for further investigation pertaining to the effectiveness of WhatsApp in improving essay writing performance among pre-university students. The mechanics of writing were also assessed for both groups using the color-coding method based on the elements that MUET examiners use to determine the marks for the writing component in the MUET examination.

Table-2. Coding of experimental students' essay writing sample.

Researcher's Codes on Students' Writing Sample	Frequency					
	Pre-test			Post-test		
	K	A	Z	K	A	Z
<i>Mechanics of writing</i>						
Proper punctuation	27	25	27	48	48	49
Poor punctuation	1	2	2	5	4	4
Proper capitalization	23	22	25	31	27	35
Poor capitalization	1	2	1	1	0	0
Poor spelling	12	12	12	11	10	13
Introduction that introduces the topic	1	1	1	1	1	1
The thesis statement that gives an outline of the essay	0	0	0	1	1	1
Topic sentence that introduces ideas	3	2	2	3	3	3
Use of cohesive devices (coherent)	9	7	7	17	18	18
Well-developed ideas	2	2	2	3	3	3
Appropriate and varied vocabulary	4	3	5	8	8	10
Examples that support the ideas	0	0	0	6	6	7
Clear paragraphing	5	4	4	5	5	5
Conclusion that summarizes the essay	1	1	1	1	1	1

The following discussion will be on the Experimental group, which used WhatsApp to improve their English language writing. The assessment for both groups is an impression marking where the examiners look into three main aspects of the essays; task fulfillment, language, and organization, which totaled up to 60 marks.

2.9. Students' Perception of Whatsapp

This section presents findings to answer Research Question 1: What are the students' perceptions of using WhatsApp in English language writing.

Table-3. Perceptions on the effect of WhatsApp English language writing.

Items	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
1. I believe I have improved myself in essay writing through the WhatsApp discussion group.	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	42.4%	57.6%
2. I did not enjoy the WhatsApp discussion for essay writing every week.	15.2%	78.8%	6.1%	0.0%	0.0%
3. I participated more in the WhatsApp group than I normally do in the classroom to enhance my essay writing skills.	0.0%	0.0%	18.2%	78.8%	3.0%
4. I believe I can enhance my essay writing knowledge through WhatsApp.	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	36.4%	63.6%
5. I enjoy my essay writing lessons in the WhatsApp group.	0.0%	0.0%	3.0%	54.5%	42.4%
6. I interact more with my teacher and friends in the WhatsApp group to enhance my essay writing skills.	0.0%	12.1%	6.1%	54.5%	27.3%
7. I prefer the teacher to use WhatsApp in teaching essay writing.	3.0%	9.1%	6.1%	54.5%	27.3%
8. I get more ideas when writing after the WhatsApp discussion.	0.0%	3.0%	0.0%	42.4%	54.5%
Items	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
9. I am more motivated to write because of the topic discussed in WhatsApp.	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	60.6%	39.4%
10. I find that my essay writing improved after the discussion in WhatsApp.	0.0%	3.0%	0.0%	54.5%	42.4%
11. My teacher encouraged me to get the most of my learning in writing via WhatsApp group (MWEG).	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	78.8%	21.2%
12. Compared to learning writing in classroom, WhatsApp is more difficult.	6.1%	63.6%	27.3%	3.0%	0.0%
13. WhatsApp makes essay writing easier.	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	60.6%	39.4%
14. WhatsApp makes learning essay writing more interesting.	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	66.7%	33.3%
15. WhatsApp has made me become a better writer.	0.0%	3.0%	0.0%	66.7%	30.3%
16. I managed to get more information to write better essays via WhatsApp group as opposed to classroom learning.	0.0%	3.0%	0.0%	66.7%	30.3%
17. I am satisfied with the WhatsApp group (MWEG) done by my teacher in improving my essay writing.	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	39.4%	60.6%

With reference to Table 3, thirty-three students responded to the questionnaire on perception, and all the questions were answered. The responses are more inclined towards the positive aspects as there are more 'agree'

and 'strongly agree' responses compared to 'disagree' and 'strongly disagree.' The statements can be categorized into positively worded statements that advocate the utilization of WhatsApp and negatively worded statements which counter the use of WhatsApp to improve their English language writing. Fifteen statements which are item number 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14, 15, 16 and 17 from the questionnaire advocate the use of WhatsApp in improving their writing (Item 1), they participate more in the WhatsApp discussion (Item 3), they enhance their essay writing knowledge (Item 4), enjoy the essay writing lessons (Item 5), interact more in the WhatsApp group (Item 6), prefer the teacher to use WhatsApp in teaching essay writing (Item 7), able to get more ideas from the WhatsApp discussion (Item 8), more motivated to write (Item 9), improve their essay writing (Item 10), receive positive encouragements from the teacher in the WhatsApp group (Item 11), WhatsApp makes it easier for them to write (Item 13), WhatsApp makes learning writing more interesting (Item 14), WhatsApp makes them a better writer (Item 15), they manage to get information to write better essays (Item 16) and are satisfied with the whole experience (Item 17). Findings derived from the 15 statements indicate that all the students agree that they improve themselves after the use of WhatsApp, and all of the respondents expressed positive feedback about the use of WhatsApp in improving English language writing and motivated them to learn to write well.

There are two negative statements, which are item number 2 and 12 in the questionnaire. The respondents disagree with all the negative statements. In item 2, about 94% of the respondents disagree that they did not enjoy the WhatsApp discussion every week. In item 12, 70% disagreed that WhatsApp is a problematic tool in learning English language writing.

2.10. Students' Acceptance of Whatsapp in English Language Writing

This section presents the answer to Research Question 2: How do students accept WhatsApp as an English language writing platform?

Based on the questionnaire, test scores, and the data obtained from mean, standard deviation (S.D.), the percentage, and also the document and thematic analysis from MWEG, the analysis was triangulated.

Table-4. Mean and standard deviation of the questionnaire.

Items	Mean	SD
1. I believe I have improved myself in essay writing through the WhatsApp discussion group.	4.58	.502
2. I did not enjoy the WhatsApp discussion for essay writing every week. (R)	1.91	.459
3. I participated more in the WhatsApp group than I normally do in the classroom to enhance my essay writing skills.	3.85	.442
4. I believe I can enhance my essay writing knowledge through WhatsApp.	4.64	.489
5. I enjoy my essay writing lessons in the WhatsApp group.	4.39	.556
6. I interact more with my teacher and friends in the WhatsApp group to enhance my essay writing skills.	3.97	.918
7. I prefer the teacher to use WhatsApp in teaching essay writing.	3.94	.998
8. I get more ideas when writing after the WhatsApp discussion.	4.48	.667
9. I am more motivated to write because of the topic discussed in WhatsApp.	4.39	.496
10. I find that my essay writing improved after the discussion in WhatsApp.	4.36	.653
11. My teacher encouraged me to get the most of my learning in writing via the WhatsApp group.	4.21	.415
12. Compared to learning writing in classroom, WhatsApp is more difficult. (R)	2.27	.626
13. WhatsApp makes essay writing easier.	4.39	.496
14. WhatsApp makes learning essay writing more interesting.	4.33	.479
15. WhatsApp has made me become a better writer.	4.24	.614
16. I managed to get more information to write a better essay via WhatsApp group (MWEG) as opposed to classroom learning.	4.24	.614
17. I am satisfied with the WhatsApp group (MWEG) done by my teacher in improving my essay writing.	4.61	.496
\bar{x}	4.05	

Table 4 shows the mean score of the 17 items in the questionnaire. The overall mean score of the questionnaire is 4.05, which indicated that most of the responses are inclined towards 'Agree' and 'Strongly Agree.' Generally, the mean score of the questionnaire indicated a reasonably positive attitude towards the students' perception regarding the use of WhatsApp in improving English Language writing.

2.11. Students' Perceptions towards WhatsApp as Platform

Research Question 3: How do students perceive WhatsApp as a platform in English language writing?

The screenshots of the students' perception also show that they agreed to the use of WhatsApp in improving their essay writing. As stated below, four opinions were chosen from different students and labeled Student Opinion 1 (S01) to Student Opinion 4 (S04). Based on the students' comments, the discussions helped them improve their essay writing and also their learning progress.

"For me, WhatsApp is a tool to instill my knowledge. Why do I say so? Because WhatsApp is beneficial for me to write a good essay. After joining this group, I made a lot of improvement in my MUET writing. This shows that WhatsApp give a lot of benefit to me. For instance, when I'm in a group discussion, I can share a lot of ideas and this will improve my essay writing... Thank you so much teacher..."

(S01)

"I personally think that this group does give me space for improving myself..."

(S02)

"After joining this group, I think it is easier for me to elaborate..."

(S03)

"Personally after engaging myself to this experimental group, it is very useful for me... I learn on how to elaborate and dare to give more ideas and opinion. Thanks teacher! You give so much effort and spend a lot of time on doing this. I'm forever grateful."

(S04)

The distribution of questionnaires helped the researcher to gain insights about the pre-university students' perceptions about the effect of WhatsApp in improving their English language writing. Their perception is positive, and they believed that they have improved in their writing performance. WhatsApp helped students in the experimental group who participated in the group discussion to improve their social connections, self-esteem, and boosted their learning performance. This showed that the writing activities participated by the students did bring improvements and, in the end, resulted in a better performance as supported by the study by Yu et al. (2010). The questions were aimed at eliciting the students' perception of WhatsApp as a platform in English language writing. The overall mean score of the questionnaire was calculated in order to study the general perception of the participants. The mean score of 4.05 indicated that most of the students were inclined towards 'Strongly Agree' and 'Agree.' The students' opinions were taken into consideration, and the analysis of the data indicated a positive perception about the use of WhatsApp. Students who were engaged in the WhatsApp group felt connected, and they benefited from the WhatsApp's discussions. As such, it was concluded that on the whole, the experimental group's participants had a positive perception of the effect of WhatsApp in improving essay writing performance.

3. IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

The effect of WhatsApp shows it is an active, convenient, and conducive platform for students to discuss their writing tasks, and in the end, their discussions enhanced their essay writing skills. It is more difficult to teach writing without using tools. Writing skills require the students to draw on many skills that are combined; thus, the difficulties and fears students face are likely in the case of students with lower language proficiency.

WhatsApp as a social group holds great potential as an alternative tool to help students improve not only in writing but also in learning the English Language. WhatsApp is a versatile platform for teaching speaking and

even reading or even other subjects taught at schools. The contribution of M-learning in the educational world should be fully utilized by teachers to engage in collaborative learning as it is a platform that students are familiar. Students will be able to not only develop communication skills but also exchange ideas and gain other benefits from their interactions in WhatsApp.

WhatsApp is used as a tool for improving students' English language writing. The students used mobile devices and a variety of other devices resulting in the new transmission of general information through the use of mobile technology. Mobile learning or M-learning has been introduced in the educational technology and gaining significant interest from educators (Prensky, 2001). This study on WhatsApp can be considered as part of a new generation of distance learning, focusing on the use of mobile devices. Mobile learning is considered as a learning technology that uses a variety of learning approaches and methods across multiple contexts and social interactions operating on personal electronic devices.

The use of applications in mobile devices such as the WhatsApp provides students with the opportunity to learn anywhere and at any time. The findings from this study suggested that mobile devices can be used in distance learning, and they are proven to be suitable for situated, authentic, and personalized mobile learning. The use of WhatsApp in learning is widely utilized in this study to enhance group interactions through discussions in the WhatsApp group and to share knowledge among students in synchronous or asynchronous mobile communication modes. This, in the end, helps to improve the students' ability in English language writing. Pre-university students are very active on social media, and these mediums are a source of attraction to increase students' motivation and to retain their attention.

WhatsApp creates a sense of enjoyment, allowing students to use WhatsApp as a learning tool in informal settings. WhatsApp is an exciting medium to consider, as a learning tool as it is mainly associated with informality rather than being in a formal setting. Therefore, the use of WhatsApp as a learning tool has a positive impact on the students' essay writing performance as it also helps the students to create their groups to facilitate active and interactive learning. It is hoped that the use of WhatsApp will be widely used as it will help generate excitement and enthusiasm towards learning, primarily when it caters to difficult learning situations in writing lessons with the lower proficiency students. Nevertheless, WhatsApp has offered a valuable opportunity for the researcher to gain insights and reflections on the teaching of essay writing as it has excellent potential to be used for educational purposes.

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